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ABSTRACT

Recalling a program session at the 1981 annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association entitled "The Small College Speech Communication Instructor: Jacks and Jills of All Trades," this paper "revisits" that session by reviewing the comments and observations made then and offering reflections on the changes that have been observed in the intervening years by three of the four original panelists. In general, the panelists indicate that many of the concerns expressed in 1981 are equally valid in 1984, with the exception of two changes: a decline in formal intercollegiate debate opportunities, and a revitalization of activities for small college personnel that has been prompted by an increase in structured and organized participation of persons from small college programs in national and regional programs. (HOD)

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STILL JACKS AND JILLS OF ALL TRADES?

Abstract

This paper is a collaborative resume of three papers originally presented in 1981 at the SCA Convention in Anaheim, California. An attempt is made to reflect on those papers and to evaluate the progress or decline in those respective areas in the ensuing four years. The general consensus appears that many factors are different, and as might be expected, in some cases for the better and for the worse in others.

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with

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and
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"The Small College--A Second Look"

Speech Communication Association
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STILL JACKS AND JILLS OF ALL TRADES?

The title of this paper takes its name from a program presented at the Speech Communication Association national convention held in Anaheim, California, in 1981, entitled "The Small College Speech Communication Instructor: Jacks and Jills of All Trades?" The papers presented were "The Advantages of Teaching in a Small College," by Joseph O'Rourke of Wabash College; "Curriculum Development and Problems in a Small College,"* by Rex Mix of Lynchburg College; "The Demands of Extra-or Co-Curricular Activities in a Small College," by Scott Nobles of Macalester College; and "Maintaining Disciplinary Integrity, Credibility, and Scholarly Activity within the Constraints of a Small College Program," by Pete Settles of Carroll College.

The program was significant because it was the first formal program in a national SCA convention in remembered history to focus specifically and exclusively on programs in Speech Communication in the context of a small college. The purpose of this paper is to "revisit" that landmark session, to review the comments and observations made then, and to reflect on positive and/or negative changes that may be observed in the intervening years. Three of the original four panelists have contributed to the paper.

* ERIC ED 210 729

From Joseph O'Rourke, Wabash College:

In 1981 at the Speech Communication Associations Convention at Anaheim, California, I was a member of the first panel sponsored by Small Colleges. As I recall, the meeting was at the last hour of the last day and the attendance was small.

My paper, "The Advantages and Disadvantages of Teaching in a Small College" was based on questionaires sent to eighty-eight schools that met the following criteria:

1. Under 5,000 enrollment with an emphasis on undergraduate education.
2. Autonomous
3. Offering a major in speech or communications.
4. Junior and Community Colleges were excluded.
5. At least one representative for each state. In states that had five small schools or more, one for each five.

I was interested in the self perception of teachers of speech in the small college. While others studied faculty in the small colleges, as far as I could discover, there had been nothing done on the small college speech teacher and his assessment of the satisfactions and dissatisfactions he experienced in his work.

In the information section of the survey I found that the respondents taught a wide variety of courses, offering three or four different subjects each semester. One reported he prepared for fifteen different courses. The necessity of teaching a large number of courses was not unusual for the small college nor was the time required for committee work.

What did set the speech teacher apart from his colleagues in other disciplines was the time required for extra-curricular programs such as debate, radio, theater, and individual events. Over twenty percent worked over twenty hours at these activities.

The next section of the study asked for a ranking of advantages and disadvantages. Contrary to the popular stereotype that these teachers were just waiting for the offer from the large University, the replies indicate that they chose to teach at a small school because they valued the close associations with students. Following closely was the freedom to teach courses "as I see fit", and next in order as the quality of life. As to disadvantages, heavy time demands and heavy extra-curricular work topped the list.

Since this first panel we have seen more and more activity among speech teachers of the small colleges mainly as a result of the SCA Small Colleges Program Committee of SCUS. Programs at the national and regional levels have been giving these teachers a platform and a forum that has not been available in recent years. The participation, I believe, has been rewarding both professionally and personally to those who have joined in this activity. In the future we may want to look to more publications from this group about the problems and opportunities of teaching in a small college.

From Scott Nobles, Macalester College

FORENSIC PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS REVISITED

In a paper at the 1981 SCA Convention I discussed problems and prospects for forensic programs at small colleges. Three years later the nature of the problems has changed little; these problems have intensified, however, and constructive adaptation has become more difficult.

The principal problems appeared to me three years ago to be the two perennials: too few dollars to support the program and too few faculty to direct and staff them. Larger academic institutions frequently face these same problems, but less often and less severely. A few small colleges have budgets and staffs equal to many universities--Macalester, my own school, is among them--but even here the worsening budgetary situation is taking its toll. All college programs are confronted by rising costs for travel, lodging, meals, and entry fees--costs which tend to grow faster than their budgets. So long as college-age population lags, budget growth is limited by stern competition for institutional dollars. At higher-tuition private colleges, adequate financing is especially unlikely.

The typical small college forensic program has only one faculty member, at most two, assigned to its direction and instruction. The impact of budget constraints is to guarantee that staff growth is much less likely than staff reduction. The bottom line is that many colleges which once provided broad, multi-faceted programs have decided to reduce the scope of these

programs, and some colleges have even dropped them entirely. The State of Minnesota, for example, now has only three forensic programs with substantial debate tournament components where a dozen or more thrived just a few years ago. The experience in Wisconsin has been similar. Many programs are now individual events only and a few have dropped all competition. In other geographical areas, either individual events have become the only program activity or debate continues on a reduced level. In some cases, traditional debate has given way to CEDA* debate, but budget and staff constraints share responsibility here with matters of preference for this audience style of debate.

My principal suggestion three years ago for adaptation to the problems just described was for expansion of a more community and campus-oriented program. I reasoned that costs would be more manageable, that travel demand problems would be reduced, and that assistance from other teachers would be more easily obtained and utilized. This suggestion, of course, was based on a worst-case scenario, one assuming no real possibility for better financing or staffing. With such benign prospects seeming even less likely in 1984, I now repeat that suggestion. Informal discussion and debate before local audiences and intramural and parliamentary debates on campus should be a part of every well-rounded forensic program; they should be the sine qua non of programs laboring under severe budgetary constraints. Such programs can combine with a limited tournament travel program to make small budgets stretch enough to continue to provide good forensic education.

* Cross Examination Debate Association

For some small colleges, the problem which has encouraged forensic reduction is the faculty staffing problem -- too much co-curricular work competing with regular teaching and advising work for any one person to manage well or happily. In the past few years, declining enrollments and declining dollars have caused concerns about job security and promotions. If faculty members are to devote the necessary time to forensic activities, they must be given encouragement and assistance from department chairs and other department colleagues. They must also be given assurance from college administrators that their forensic teaching and coaching will be valued and rewarded.

Many large colleges and universities have probably become aware that they are facing a ripple effect from small college problems. A decline in small college budget and staffing has harmed almost all forensic programs, not just small ones. As the number of participating schools and students declines in each geographical area, the number and size of tournaments also declines. All schools, large and small, must now travel farther, spend more, and be absent from campus longer to attend an optimum number of tournaments and to provide opportunities for optimum number of students. Except possibly for those schools which have concentrated primarily on a small, elite group which travelled only the national circuit, large schools are also being handicapped in providing competition forensic experience to interested and talented students. I believe they have a significant stake in the answers to our small college problems.

I look forward to a resurgence of small college enrollments and an easing of financial problems. I look forward to many small colleges being able to return to more complete and varied forensic programs. At the moment, adaptation to less happy circumstances appears necessary. Increase in relative emphasis on campus and community forensic events and increased assurance, encouragement, and assistance for forensic faculty might prove very helpful until better financial resources and more staffing help arrive.

In 1981, addressing the issue of Curriculum Development in the Small College, I observed that there are five factors which contribute to success in a small college program: results, perseverance, goals/direction, reciprocity, and professional development.

At Anaheim, the position was taken that as students become interested in the field, the demand for courses increases. As the student demand increases, the program grows and gains recognition throughout the college. As colleagues in other disciplines become aware of the quality and value of the curriculum, they began to feed students into the courses, thereby increasing the demand (and the teaching load!) which in turn provided persuasive evidence for administrators that more professional help is needed. This much still holds true; results speak.

On a less generalizable base, and speaking autobiographically in Chicago in 1984, I would add that one or two well-timed and well-placed retirements can boost a program. Without being critical of the former administration, the acquisition of a new president and a new academic dean within two academic years has proven invaluable to the program where I am. Without one being wrong and the other right, the new administration's priorities are simply different, but the Speech Communication program is benefitting nicely.

There are still times when the pressures build, and the program seems to be ignored, and the efforts seem to go unnoticed and unrewarded. In these times, the small college

instructor(s) may be tempted to "throw in the towel," and look for a position where these specific problems can be overcome in a larger context. While this perseverance is not always rewarded, the results are usually sufficient for these people to continue to choose to remain where they are. Since 1981, it has also become apparent, especially in light of Goldberg's introduction to Innovative Programs at the Small College: Doing What We Do Best (Buzza, Ripon College Press, 1983), that problems in larger institutions are not always different than those in smaller programs. The question becomes "Why change a set of problems where you enjoy being for a set of larger/different/similar/same problems where you are not certain you want to be?"

It is as true in Chicago as it was in Anaheim that perseverance, hard work, and promising results are worth little if they are not well directed by clearly articulated goals, readily apparent to all who are involved in, touched by, or related to the program.

The earlier paper indicated a limited view of desirable reciprocity:

> Colleagues in other departments cannot assist and support the speech program if the instructors in the speech program are unknown or unwilling to assist and support them as well. Interest and involvement in campus-wide, total faculty activities and responsibilities lead to exposure and visibility. Exposure and visibility lead then to assistance and support. (Mix, 1981)

Four years experience since that statement was made would add two more areas of desirable reciprocity. Willingness to serve on and chair important faculty committees has placed

me in a position to develop significant relationships with top administrators (perhaps another advantage of small college programs: access to top administrators is not always possible in larger institutions). Those positive relationships can be helpful when curriculum and personnel decisions are made because the decision-makers are already informally familiar with the program and staff.

A third area of reciprocity points toward the fifth major factor contributing to the success of a small college program. The increased involvement of small college personnel in national and regional association programs and conventions has created and opened doors that barely existed before Anaheim. Since the first small college action caucus in New York in 1980, attended by 12 people who focused most of their energy complaining about their respective problems, the list of persons identifiably from small colleges actively participating in SCA and SCUS has grown to over 100. The emerging network and services rendered to each other by these people has proven to be an invaluable means of professional development through reciprocity. The growth and impact of this group has resolved many of the problems referred to in Anaheim as an absence of socialization, collegiality, and visibility on the part of small college personnel.

In conclusion with reference to curriculum development in the small college, the 1981 paper is still basically valid. Four years of growth and development have simply opened new doors and pointed new directions for more challenging but enjoyably more profitable endeavors.

CONCLUSION:

In general conclusion, the papers indicate that many of the concerns expressed in 1981 are equally valid in 1984. There have been some changes, however, Nobles points to the decline in formal intercollegiate debate opportunities and suggests the possibility of redefining and restructuring small college forensics to smaller/fewer tournaments and implementation of more community based and intramural forensics activities. O'Rourke and Mix observe that the increasingly structured and organized participation of persons from small college programs in national and regional programs have revitalized activities for small college personnel.

Nobles' definition and prescriptions were addressed briefly in the 1983 Small College Program Committee Business Session in Washington, D.C., and will receive further consideration. The very existence of that business session in Washington aludes to the validity of the observations by O'Rourke and Mix. The following table is indicative of the growth of programs and activities at national SCA conventions specifically focused on small programs.

Site	YR	I D	A C	Soc	Pro	Bus
Chicago	84	X	X	X	3	X
Washington	83	X	X	X	3	X
Louisville	82	X	X	X	3	
Anaheim	81	X	X	X	1	
New York	80	X	X			
San Antonio	79	X				
Minneapolis	78	X				

I D = Informal Discussions
A C = Action Caucus
Soc = Formal Social Function
Pro = Formal Convention Programs
Bus = Separate formal business session for the Small College Program Committee of the Senior College and University Section

What began as a conversation by four individuals over coffee in Minneapolis, with a decided boost by Joseph MacDoniels of Hope College who planned the first action caucus in New York as then-Chairperson of SCUS and later as respondent in the Anaheim program, with increased recognition by the SCUS of the value of small college programs, and the general support of SCA Executive Director, William Work, small college personnel are beginning to contribute to and receive from the national Association. As the network grows, the various regional associations in varying degrees are acknowledging the presence and contribution of small college personnel

In answer to the question, are we "Still Jacks and Jills of All Trades?", the answer is resoundingly affirmative, and getting better at it every year!